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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (02/20): "EFFORTS TO JUDAIZE  
JERUSALEM CONTINUE"

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Main Stories:  
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All front pages feature and Al Quds leads with news that Israeli  
President Peres will meet with the heads of the Kadima and Likud  
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parties on February 20 to seek agreement for a national unity  
government. If efforts fail, papers report that Peres will ask  
Likud's Netanyahu to form a government. Al Quds quotes former US  
Ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer calling a possible  
Netanyahu-Lieberman coalition a, "dangerous combination for U.S.  
interests." He is also quoted stating that the Obama administration  
would like to see a broad-based coalition government that includes  
both Kadima and Likud.

Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida lead with angry Egyptian reactions  
to Israel's decision to link the release of Israeli soldier Shalit  
to a Gaza truce agreement with Hamas. Al Hayat Al Jadida's front  
page adds that Egypt has put on hold trade negotiations with Israel,  
ordering its trade delegation to immediately return from Israel. In  
related reporting, Al Quds' front page quotes PLO Executive  
Committee member Yasir Abd Rabbuh stating that internal Palestinian  
talks should not be delayed by Israel's decision or other Israeli  
issues. The paper further notes that Abd Rabbuh spoke to the press  
after meeting with U.S. Senator Lieberman in Ramallah.

All papers run front page photos and reports on the visits to Gaza  
by Senator Kerry and Congressmen Baird and Ellison. The photos show  
the Congressmen inspecting "post-war devastation" in Gaza, and  
highlight that the visits were not sponsored by the U.S.  
administration. The Congressmen are quoted expressing "sorrow and  
dismay" over what they saw in Gaza. Senator Kerry is quoted  
clarifying that his visit does not imply any change in U.S. policy  
towards Hamas and indicates only, "our wish to listen and learn."  
The papers note that the delegations visited the Gaza Center for

Psychological Health and received briefings on the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza. The papers also quote Hamas' reactions to the visits. Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhum hoped for a change in President Obama's policy towards Hamas and stated that the congressional visits were a "first step in the right direction" but did not go far enough and that additional steps were needed.

Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page reports that Russia has decided to stop meeting with Hamas representatives after their failure to convince Hamas to accept the Middle East Quartet's three conditions.

All papers run front page coverage of a signing ceremony between Palestinian Authority (PA) Premier Fayyad and banks to allow the PA to provide direct assistance to, "Gaza war victims." The papers quote Fayyad stating that 4,000 housing units were completely destroyed in Gaza, leaving more than 23,500 Palestinians homeless, and that 11,000 housing units were partially damaged, affecting another 78,000. In related reporting, Al Quds' front page notes a European Commission donation of \$41 million to UNRWA's emergency Gaza appeal.

Al Quds' front page notes an "escalation" in Israeli military operations in Gaza and the West Bank. The report details February 19 actions such as Israeli machine-gun fire near the Gaza Kerem Shalom crossing and arrests near Hebron and other West Bank areas. Meanwhile, Al Ayyam's front page cites AFP in reporting that five Palestinians rockets were fired from Gaza onto Israel on February 19, causing no damage.

All front pages highlight the February 19 Fatah Revolutionary Council meeting that yielded the decision to hold Fatah's convention by next December. The Council's declaration that no negotiations should be conducted with Israel before settlement activities cease,

JERUSALEM 00000308 002 OF 002

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parties on February 20 to seek agreement for a national unity government. If efforts fail, papers report that Peres will ask Likud's Netanyahu to form a government. Al Quds quotes former US Ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer calling a possible Netanyahu-Lieberman coalition a, "dangerous combination for U.S. interests." He is also quoted stating that the Obama administration would like to see a broad-based coalition government that includes both Kadima and Likud.

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is also highlighted.

In Jerusalem settlement news, Al Quds' front page reports that an Israeli court has delayed its ruling on a dispute over the ownership of 28 houses in East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. The paper explains that the delay came after Palestinians presented the court with evidence that "Israeli settlers" forged relevant ownership documents.

In an inside report, Al Quds cites London-based Al Sharq Al Awsat daily in quoting U.S. envoy George Mitchell stating that the "economic peace" called for by Israeli Likud leader Netanyahu "is not enough" if it is not coupled with political action. He is also quoted saying that the U.S. would like to see a Palestinian Authority unity government that includes Fatah and Hamas, and that the U.S. appreciates Egyptian efforts towards Palestinian reconciliation.

Al Quds' reports on an inside page that USAID Director Howard Sumka visited the Palestinian Authority Higher Judicial Council in Ramallah and the Rafidiyyah hospital in Nablus on February 19. Sumka is quoted confirming USAID commitment to supporting the Palestinian judiciary sector.

Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida's front pages report on Jewish immigration from Yemen to Israel. According to coverage the new immigrants were escaping murder threats and harassment. Al Ayyam runs a front page photo of the new immigrants. -----

BLOCK QUOTES:

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1) Al Quds editorial is titled, "Efforts to Judaize Jerusalem continue: We need more than a halt to negotiations"(02/19): "It seems that we, at the official level, have been late in realizing the futility of negotiations[while] settlement activities continue... we [need]to send a message to the U.S. administration, as it sinks into the global economic swamp... that this Israeli policy... will certainly threaten American interests because regional peace and stability have been identified as American interests by more than one official in Washington."

WALLES